STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 149

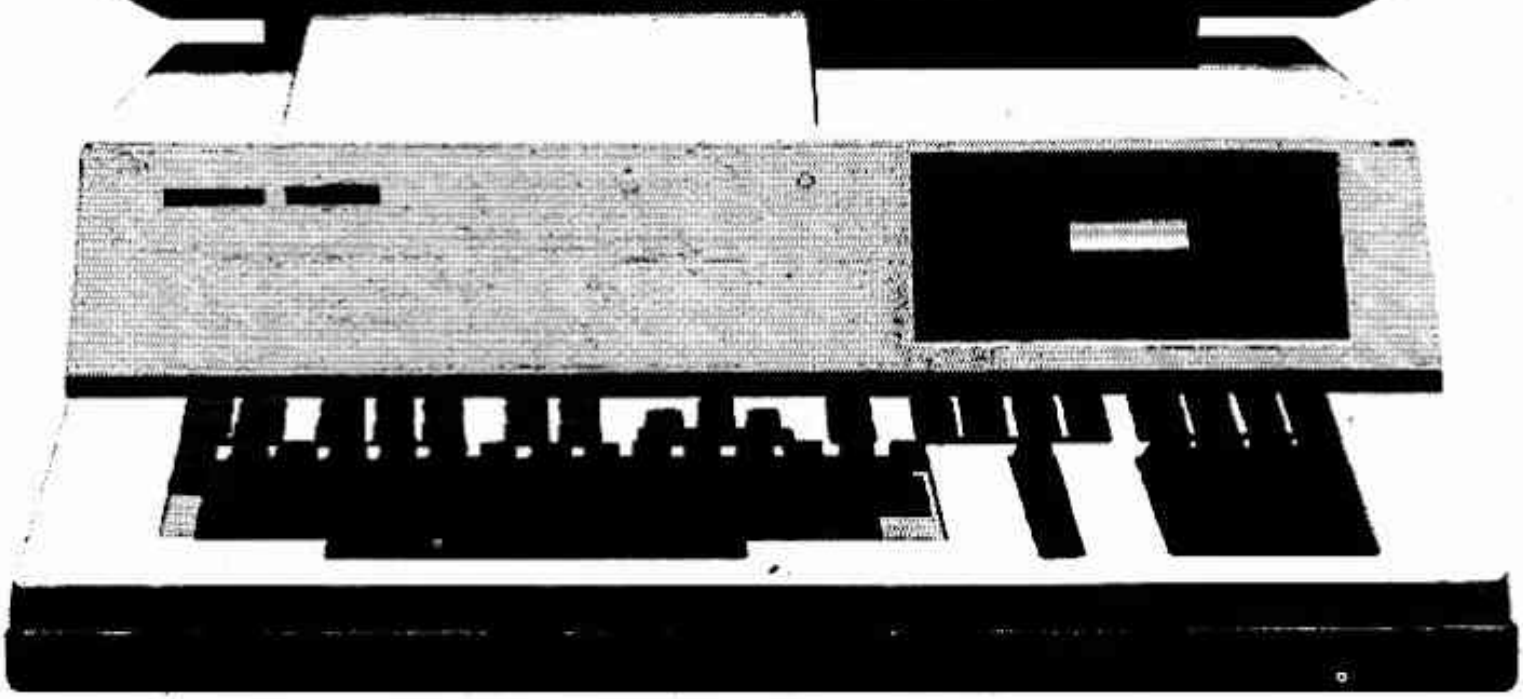
22p

DEADLY PILGRIMAGE

For centuries the Terran colonists had lived and died in the vast colony ship called Pilgrim. But when they reached their destination, they weren't welcome . . .

STARBLAZER

VAST TERRAN COLONY SHIPS HAD BEEN LAUNCHED AT THE TURN OF THE 23RD CENTURY TO FIND NEW HOMES IN THE FAR-OFF GALAXIES. THE MIND-BOGGLING DISTANCES INVOLVED MEANT THAT GENERATION AFTER GENERATION LIVED AND DIED AS THE CRAFT PLOUGHED ITS MONOTONOUS WAY ACROSS THE VACUUM OF SPACE. SHIP'S SERVO-DROIDS HANDLED ALMOST EVERYTHING, TAKING MORE AND MORE RESPONSIBILITY, UNTIL THEY ENDED UP RUNNING THE SHIP THEMSELVES, LEAVING THE HUMANS FREE TO ENJOY A LIFE OF LEISURE. WITH ITS MISSION LONG-FORGOTTEN, THE "PILGRIM" CONTINUED ITS LONELY VOYAGE THROUGH SPACE — IT BECAME A . . .



DEADLY PILGRIMAGE

LIFE WAS CAREFREE ABOARD THE 'PILGRIM'. WITH SERVO-DROIDS TO DO ALL THE WORK, FEW PEOPLE BOTHERED TO DO ANYTHING AT ALL, EXCEPT CRITICISE OTHERS.

LOOK AT THOSE FOOLISH JUVES UP THERE. ONE DAY THEY'LL CAUSE AN ACCIDENT, MARK MY WORDS.

BEATS ME WHAT THEY FIND SO INTERESTING UP THERE. ISN'T THERE ENOUGH DOWN HERE TO KEEP THEM OCCUPIED?

BUT EVEN SOME OF THE JUVES WEREN'T TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THRILLSEEKING—

COME ON, ARLON . . . YOU'RE LAGGING BEHIND. THIS IS NO TIME TO BE DAYDREAMING.

BUT MAYBE IT IS — EVERY TIME WE COME UP HERE I WONDER WHAT'S OUTSIDE THIS DOME.

HAVE SOME FUN FOR A CHANGE.
SORRY, FELLOWS, I'M JUST NOT IN THE MOOD.

AW, LEAVE HIM, DARL. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN JOIN AN AIRBALL MATCH SOMEWHERE.

ARLON HEADED FOR THE VID-CENTRE—
GOOD DAY, SIR. I AM YOUR VID-CENTRE DROID. IT HAS BEEN SO LONG SINCE ANYONE SOUGHT ACCESS TO MY VIDEO BANKS. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
ER . . . I'M NOT SURE. I'D JUST LIKE TO BROWSE AROUND FOR A WHILE . . .

ARLON KEYED THROUGH THE INDEX AND FOUND SOMETHING STARTLING.
. . . THE 'PILGRIM' IS BUT ONE OF A FLEET OF RECONNAISSANCE VESSELS LAUNCHED FROM EARTH IN THE YEAR . . .
INCREDIBLE! WE ARE LIVING ON BOARD SOME KIND OF VESSEL AND NO-ONE EVEN KNOWS IT!

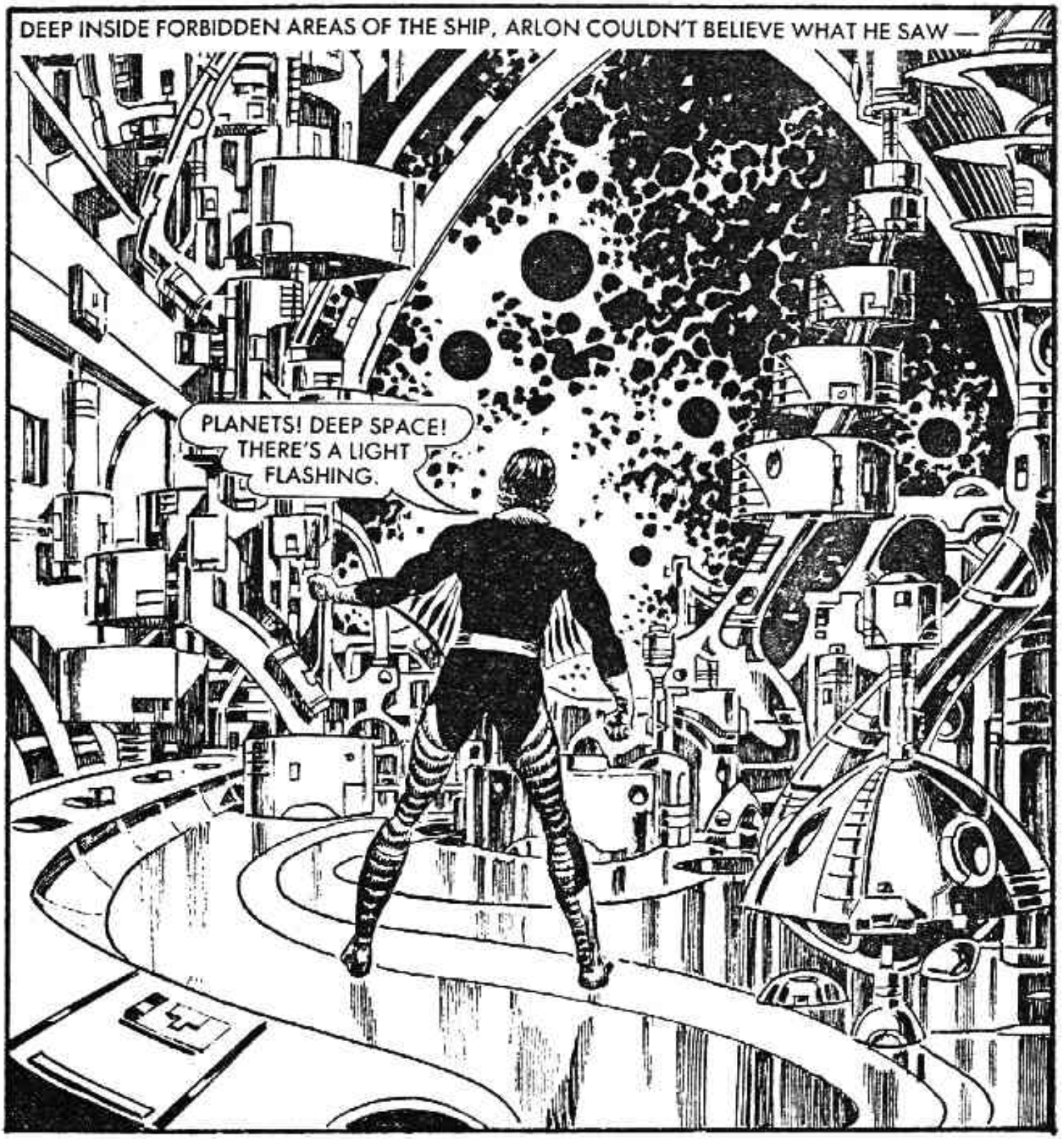
WHY AREN'T WE TOLD ALL THIS AT EDUCATION CLASSES?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT INFORMATION IS RESTRICTED. THERE MUST BE A FAULT IN THE COMPUTER. THIS INFORMATION SHOULD HAVE BEEN ERASED LONG AGO.
I HAVE SEALED THE EXITS SO THAT YOU CANNOT ESCAPE . . . AND AN ENFORCER DROID IS NOW ON ITS WAY TO MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT REVEAL THIS INFORMATION.

ARLON SHUDDERED AND RAN FROM THE ENFORCER DROID.
STOP HIM! STOP HIM!
WHAT A BRUTE! YOU'RE NOT GETTING YOUR HANDS ON ME UNTIL I FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

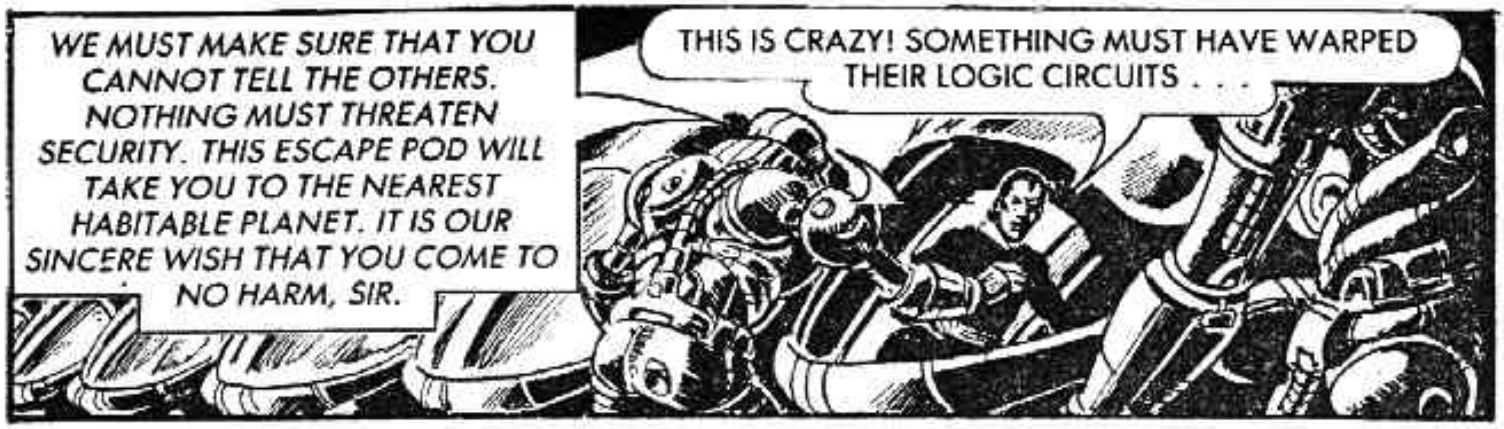
ALERTING ALL ENFORCERS . . . HUMAN INTRUDER IN SECTOR 39 . . . APPREHEND IMMEDIATELY . . .

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY SHOULD THE SERVO-DROIDS HAVE TURNED AGAINST ME?

MAYBE I CAN HIDE IN HERE . . .

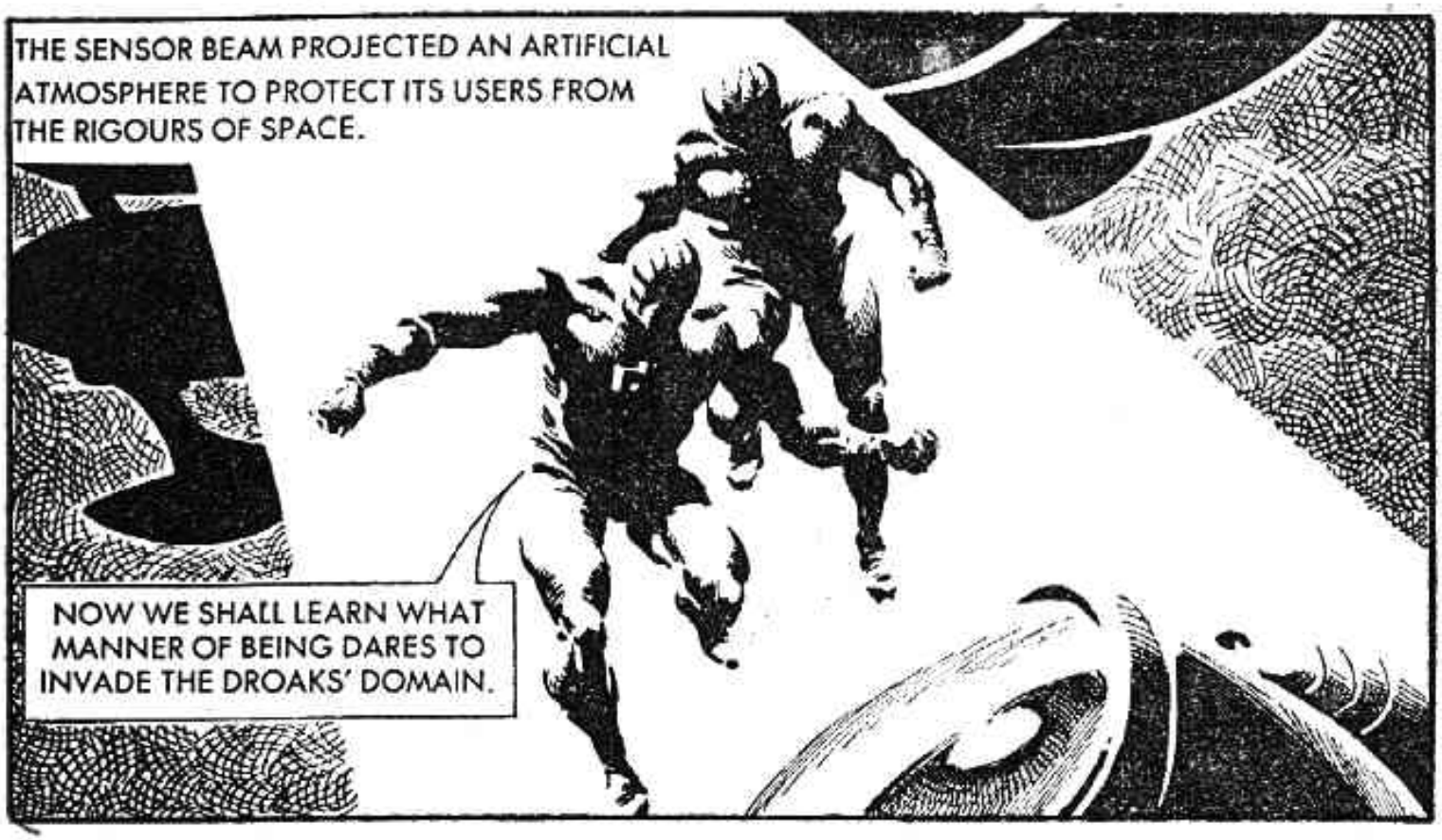

DEEP INSIDE FORBIDDEN AREAS OF THE SHIP, ARLON COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE SAW —
PLANETS! DEEP SPACE! THERE'S A LIGHT FLASHING.

ARLON READ THE MESSAGE THE FLASHING LIGHT HAD BEEN INDICATING—
ACCORDING TO THIS, WE'RE ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH A PLANET DEAD AHEAD!
COME WITH US, SIR . . . THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOU IN HERE.
NO! WAIT! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THIS SHIP IS IN DANGER . . .
WE ARE NOT PROGRAMMED TO ALTER THE VESSEL'S PRE-SET CONTROLS.
THEN BRING MORE HUMANS FROM THE LIVING DOME. LET THEM TRY TO AVERT THE DISASTER.
NO . . . IT IS WRONG FOR THE MASTERS TO DO ANY WORK. THAT IS OUR FUNCTION. WE HAVE SEEN TO IT THAT THE MASTERS HAVE NO WORRIES AND THAT THEY LIVE OUT THEIR LIVES IN PEACE AND CONTENTMENT.


WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT YOU CANNOT TELL THE OTHERS. NOTHING MUST THREATEN SECURITY. THIS ESCAPE POD WILL TAKE YOU TO THE NEAREST HABITABLE PLANET. IT IS OUR SINCERE WISH THAT YOU COME TO NO HARM, SIR.
THIS IS CRAZY! SOMETHING MUST HAVE WARPED THEIR LOGIC CIRCUITS . . .

THE CAPSULE WAS LAUNCHED STRAIGHT INTO THE MIDST OF A BATTLE—
NOW WHAT? IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A FULL-SCALE WAR GOING ON OUT HERE!

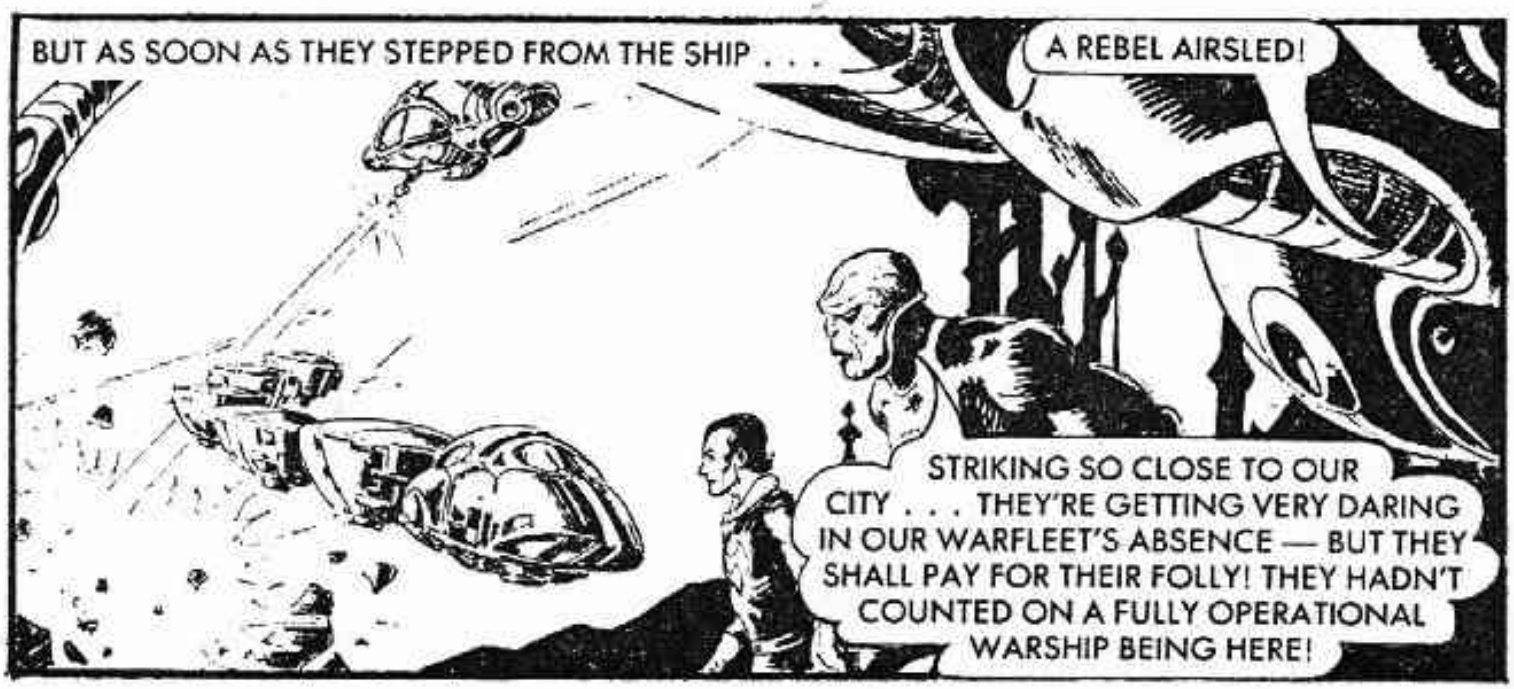
FROM ONE OF THE ATTACKING SHIP, A SENSOR BEAM LANCED OUT—
ALIEN CAPSULE REGISTERING LIFE-FORM READING. PULLING IN FOR INVESTIGATIONS.
I'M BEING DRAGGED TOWARDS THAT SPACE SHIP.


THE SENSOR BEAM PROJECTED AN ARTIFICIAL ATMOSPHERE TO PROTECT ITS USERS FROM THE RIGOURS OF SPACE.
NOW WE SHALL LEARN WHAT MANNER OF BEING DARES TO INVADE THE DROAKS' DOMAIN.

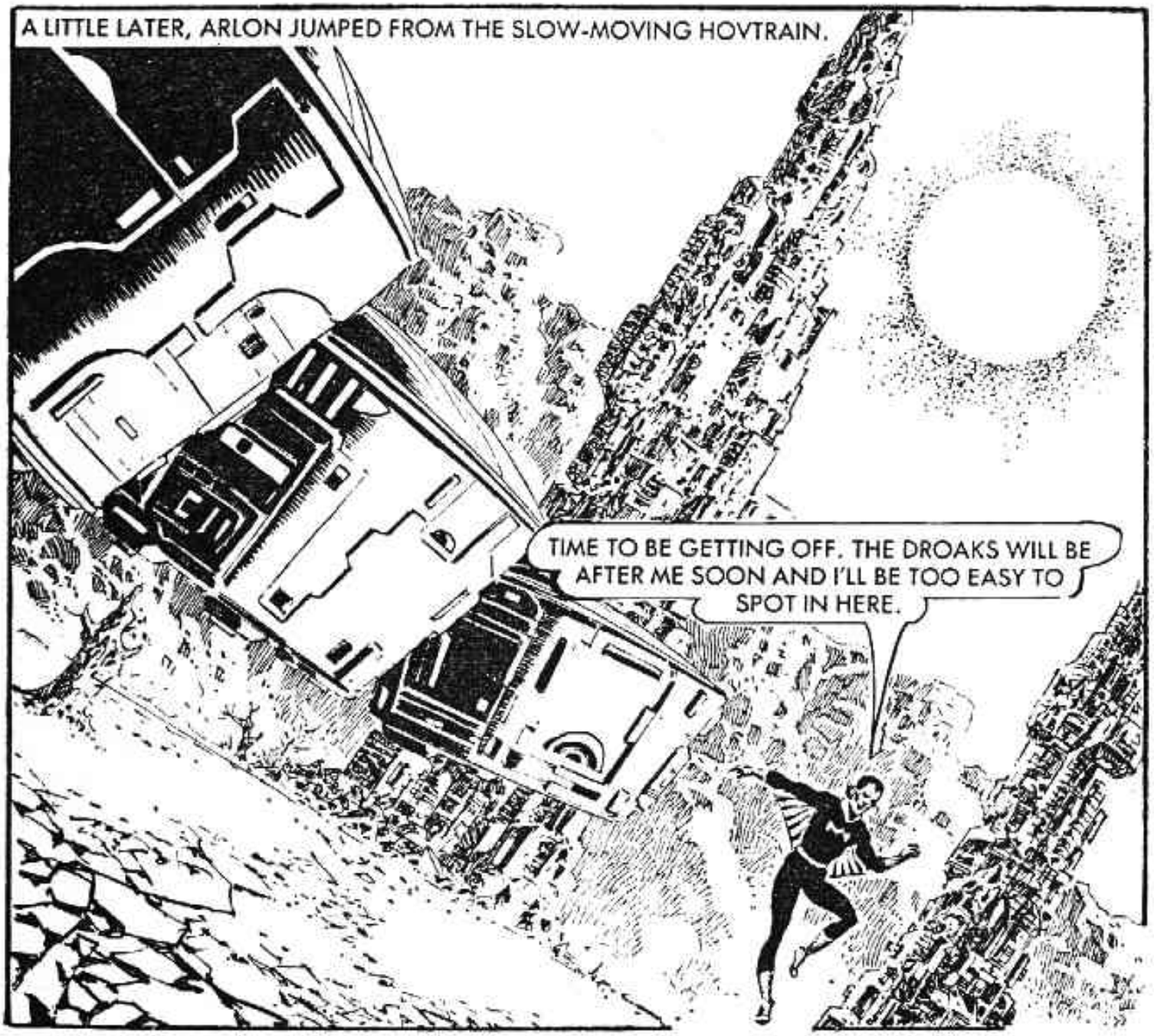
USING A GALACTIC TRANSLATOR PACK, THE DROAK'S DEDUCED ARLON'S ORIGINS—
A HUMAN! WHERE ARE YOU FROM, HUMAN? AND WHY DO YOU VIOLATE OUR SPACE?
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT . . .
HE'S GOING TO BE STUBBORN. LET US RETURN TO BASE WITH HIM IMMEDIATELY.

AFTER A SHORT JOURNEY, THE CRAFT LANDED—

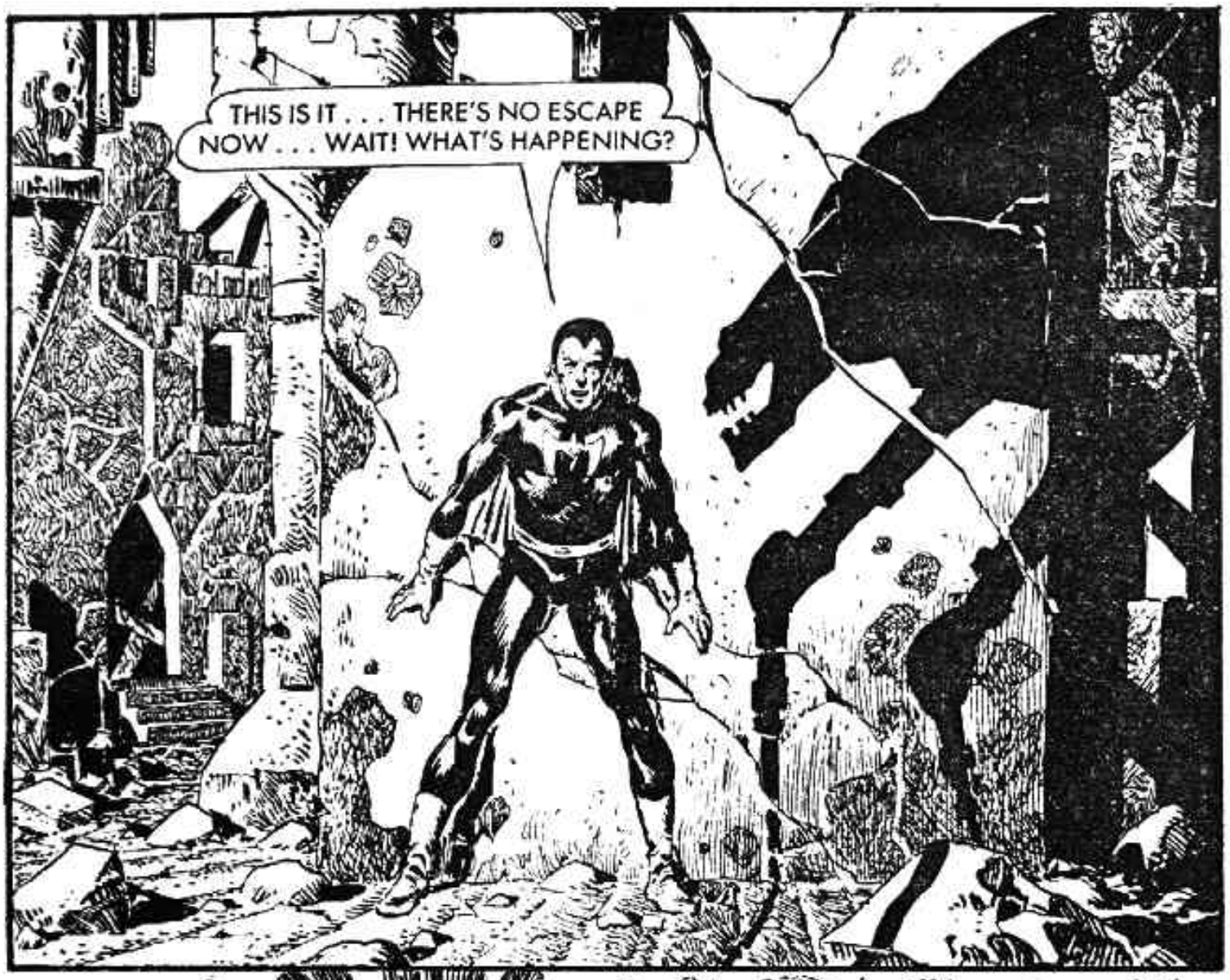
YOU'LL TALK SOON ENOUGH, HUMAN . . . ONCE YOU'VE SAMPLED INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES . . .

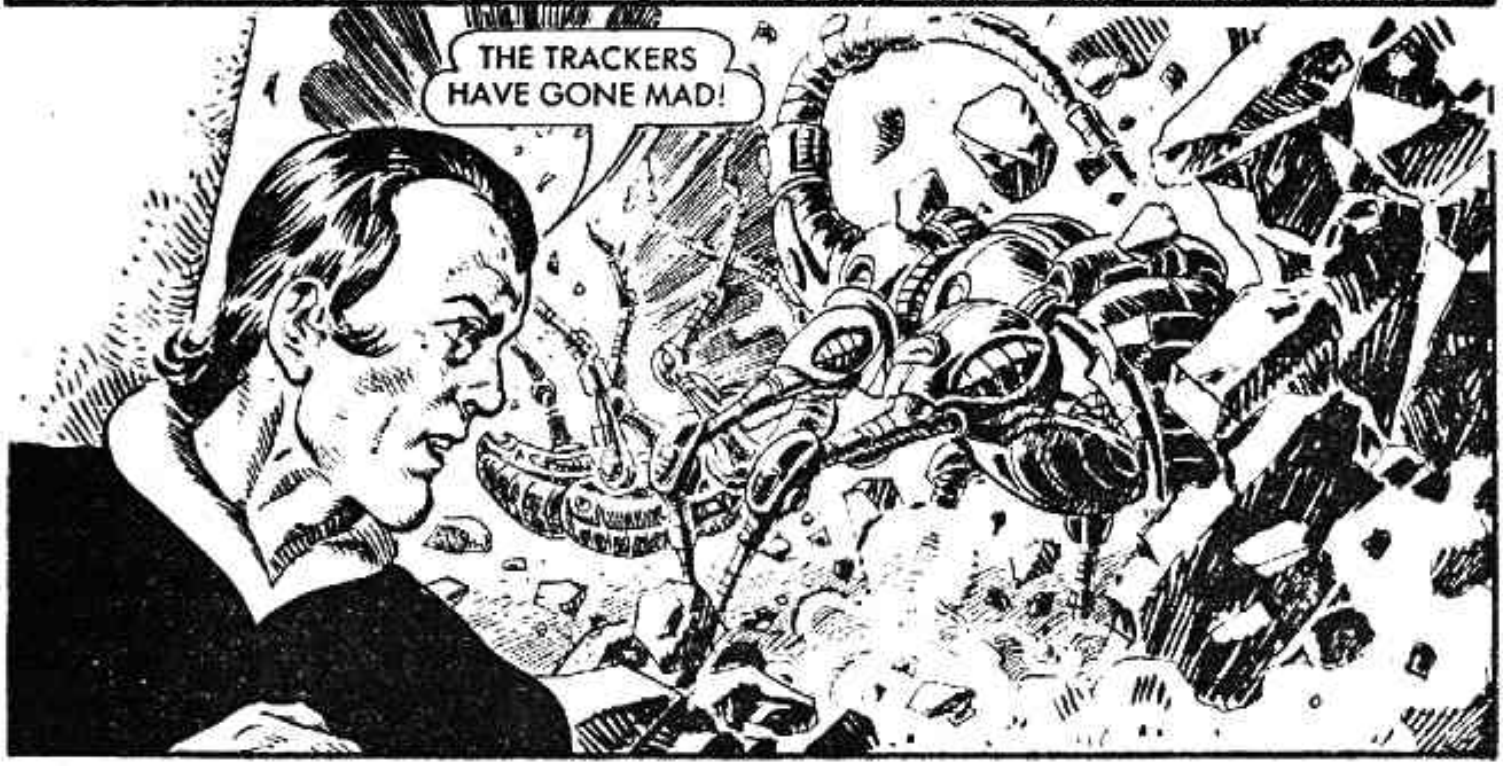


ARLON TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION.
NOW'S MY CHANCE — WHILE THE DROAKS ARE DISTRACTED.


A LITTLE LATER, ARLON JUMPED FROM THE SLOW-MOVING HOVTRAIN.
TIME TO BE GETTING OFF. THE DROAKS WILL BE AFTER ME SOON AND I'LL BE TOO EASY TO SPOT IN HERE.

THAT WAS LUCKY! JUST GOT OUT OF SIGHT IN TIME.
IT'S NO USE. HE COULD BE ANYWHERE. WE WON'T FIND HIM LIKE THIS. THE TRACKERS WILL DO THE JOB NOW.
SHORTLY AFTER—
THOSE MUST BE THE TRACKERS! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING ON LEGS MOVE SO FAST BEFORE!
BACK AT A DROAK CONTROL CENTRE.
WE'VE GOT HIM NOW. THE TRACKERS ARE CLOSING IN ON HIM.


THIS IS IT . . . THERE'S NO ESCAPE NOW . . . WAIT! WHAT'S HAPPENING?


THE TRACKERS HAVE GONE MAD!

THE INCIDENT WAS SEEN IN THE DROAK CONTROL CENTRE—
THE TRACKERS HAVE GOT TOO NEAR THE URANIUM QUARRIES. THE RADIATION HAS UPSET THEIR DELICATE MECHANISMS. THE PRISONER IS GETTING AWAY . . .
ARLON SOON FOUND HIMSELF BESIDE ONE OF THE URANIUM QUARRIES.
HUMANS — LIKE MYSELF!
BUT . . . BUT THEY'RE BEING TREATED LIKE SLAVES!

BUT NO MATTER FOR THE MOMENT, MAYBE I'LL BE ABLE TO HIDE AMONG THEM FOR A WHILE . . .
BUT, JUST THEN —
LOOK OUT! ANOTHER BLASTER HAS EXPLODED!

ARLON SLIPPED INTO THE WORK GROUP —
ON YOUR FEET, SLAVES! MACHINES ARE NOT RELIABLE IN THIS HIGHLY RADIOACTIVE AREA — BUT HUMAN LABOUR IS ALWAYS PLENTIFUL!

WHAT A WORLD TO BE STRANDED ON! I'LL NEVER SEE MY HOMEWORLD EARTH NOW . . .
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, STRANGER? THIS IS EARTH.

ARLON'S RAGE OVERCAME HIS CAUTION

THE ATTACK WAS SO UNEXPECTED THAT THE DROAK HAD NO TIME TO DEFEND HIMSELF.
MORE GUARDS APPROACHING . . . GOT TO TRY AND GAIN CONTROL OF THIS PLATFORM.

NOT TOO DIFFICULT . . . JUST A MATTER OF BALANCE AND SHIFTING ONE'S WEIGHT CORRECTLY. TO GO FASTER ALL I NEED DO IS LEAN FORWARD, LIKE . . .
. . . THIS!
HE'S GETTING AWAY!

WE'LL HAVE HIM SOON. THERE'S NOTHING BUT SLAG MOUNDS IN THAT DIRECTION.
REMEMBER HOW UGLY THIS CONTINENT USED TO BE BEFORE WE GOT RID OF ALL THAT UNNECESSARY PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE? THE HUMANS USED TO CALL IT ASIA.

ARLON'S CRAFT WAS HIT —
UNHH!
HE STILL LIVES! THE FALL HAS ONLY STUNNED HIM.
GOOD . . . THE OVERLORD HIMSELF WANTS TO SEE THIS ONE. WE'D BETTER GET HIM ON AN AIR-SHUTTLE.

SOMETIME LATER ARLON FOUND HIMSELF BEFORE THE DROAK OVERLORD.
SO, HUMAN, YOU AWAKEN AT LAST.

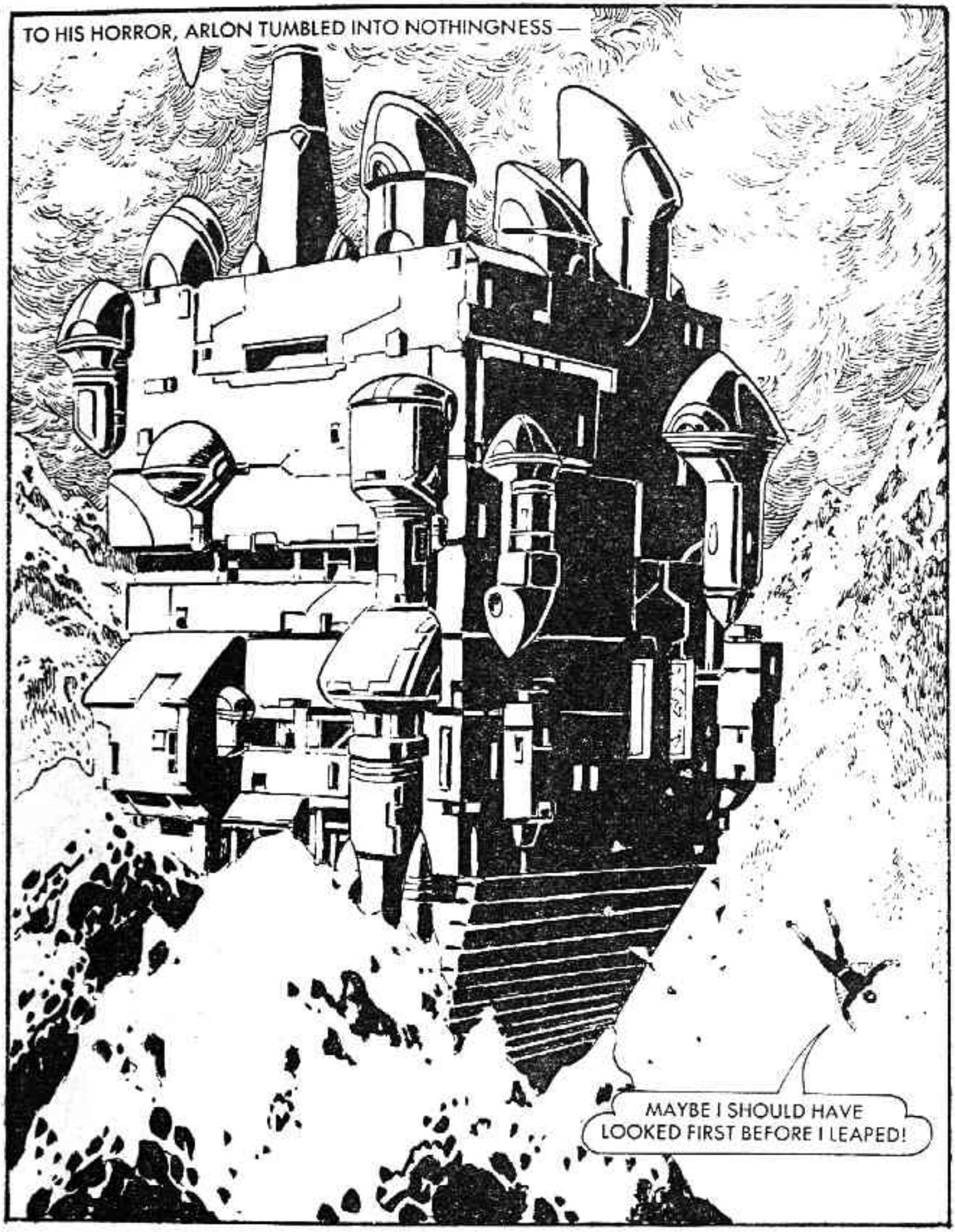
THE SHIP YOU CAME FROM IS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THIS PLANET AND MY WARFLEET IS POWERLESS AGAINST IT. HOW CAN WE AVERT ITS COURSE?
I-I DON'T KNOW . . . THE VESSEL IS ENTIRELY UNDER ROBOT CONTROL.
ROBOTS, EH? THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA . . . TAKE HIM TO THE ELECTRO-VAULTS. I'M FINISHED WITH HIM.

THE OVERLORD CONTACTED THE SPACEPORT —
PREPARE ANOTHER SHIP FOR IMMEDIATE LAUNCH — ONLY THIS TIME I WANT SOME HUMAN SLAVES ABOARD, TOO . . .
WHILE, IN THE ELECTRO-VAULTS . . .
IN YOU GO, HUMAN! THIS WON'T KILL YOU, BUT YOU'LL SOON BE WISHING IT WOULD!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HE SHOULD BE SCREAMING BY NOW . . .
LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE MECHANISM.

BUT, AS THE DROAKS ENTERED THE VAULT . . .
I KNEW IT! A FAULT IN THE . . . AAARRGH!!

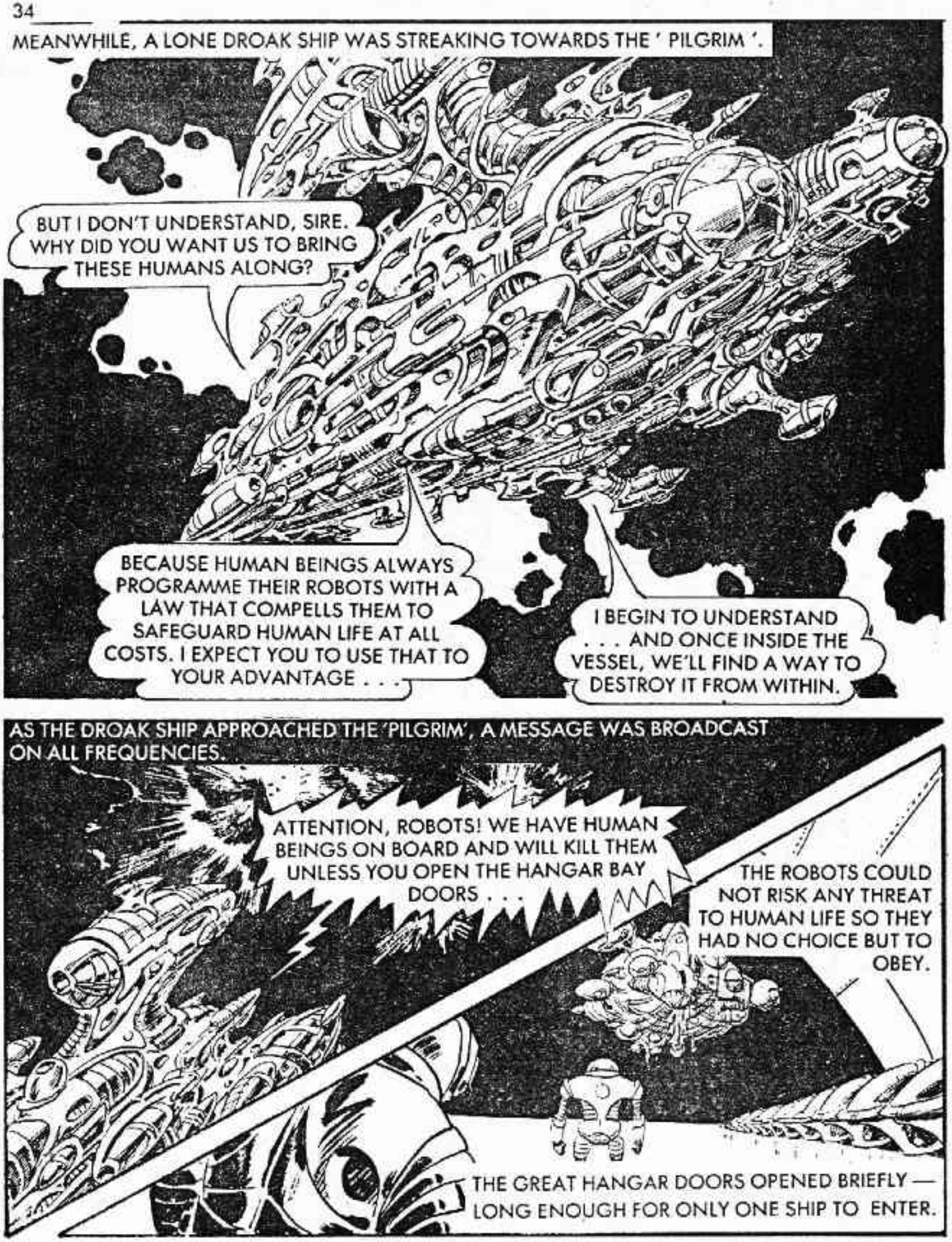
LUCKILY MY ANTI-GRAVS STILL HAVE SOME POWER LEFT. THEY ARE KEEPING ME OUT OF CONTACT WITH THE FLOOR.

NOW TO FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE. WHOOPS — MORE GUARDS!
THE PRISONER IS LOOSE!
THIS WINDOW — MY ONLY CHANCE!
HE'S GETTING AWAY! RAISE THE ALARM!


TO HIS HORROR, ARLON TUMBLED INTO NOTHINGNESS —
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE LOOKED FIRST BEFORE I LEAPED!

MY ANTI-GRAVS ARE ALMOST EXHAUSTED . . . BUT MAYBE I CAN ANGLE MY FALL TOWARDS THE MOUNTAINSIDE . . .
THE AIR IS TOO THIN . . . MY GLIDER SUIT IS ALMOST USELESS THIS HIGH UP . . . AND IT'S GETTING HARD . . . TO . . . BREATHE . . .
A-ALMOST THERE . . . GOT TO S-STAY CONSCIOUS JUST . . . A LITTLE . . . LONGER . . .

ON THE VERGE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS, ARLON PLUNGED INTO A SNOWBANK —
BUT EVEN ON THE DESOLATE MOUNTAIN SLOPE, HIS ARRIVAL HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED.
ARLON NEVER FELT THE HANDS THAT PICKED HIM UP . . .
. . . AND HE REMAINED COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE THAT CARRIED HIM FURTHER INTO THE UNKNOWN TERRITORY.


MEANWHILE, A LONE DROAK SHIP WAS STREAKING TOWARDS THE ' PILGRIM '.
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIRE. WHY DID YOU WANT US TO BRING THESE HUMANS ALONG?
BECAUSE HUMAN BEINGS ALWAYS PROGRAMME THEIR ROBOTS WITH A LAW THAT COMPELLS THEM TO SAFEGUARD HUMAN LIFE AT ALL COSTS. I EXPECT YOU TO USE THAT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE . . .
I BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND . . . AND ONCE INSIDE THE VESSEL, WE'LL FIND A WAY TO DESTROY IT FROM WITHIN.
AS THE DROAK SHIP APPROACHED THE 'PILGRIM', A MESSAGE WAS BROADCAST ON ALL FREQUENCIES.
ATTENTION, ROBOTS! WE HAVE HUMAN BEINGS ON BOARD AND WILL KILL THEM UNLESS YOU OPEN THE HANGAR BAY DOORS . . .
THE ROBOTS COULD NOT RISK ANY THREAT TO HUMAN LIFE SO THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY.
THE GREAT HANGAR DOORS OPENED BRIEFLY — LONG ENOUGH FOR ONLY ONE SHIP TO ENTER.

BUT AS FAR AS THE DROAKS WERE CONCERNED, THAT ONE SHIP WAS QUITE ENOUGH.
NOW THEY SHALL LEARN WHY THE DROAK RACE IS FEARED ABOVE ALL OTHERS!
THE DROAK SHIP SPED THROUGH THE BOWELS OF THE HUGE VESSEL, SPREADING DESTRUCTION WHEREVER IT WENT.

AND WITH A RESOUNDING CRASH, THE PILGRIM'S ORDERLY WORLD WAS NO MORE!

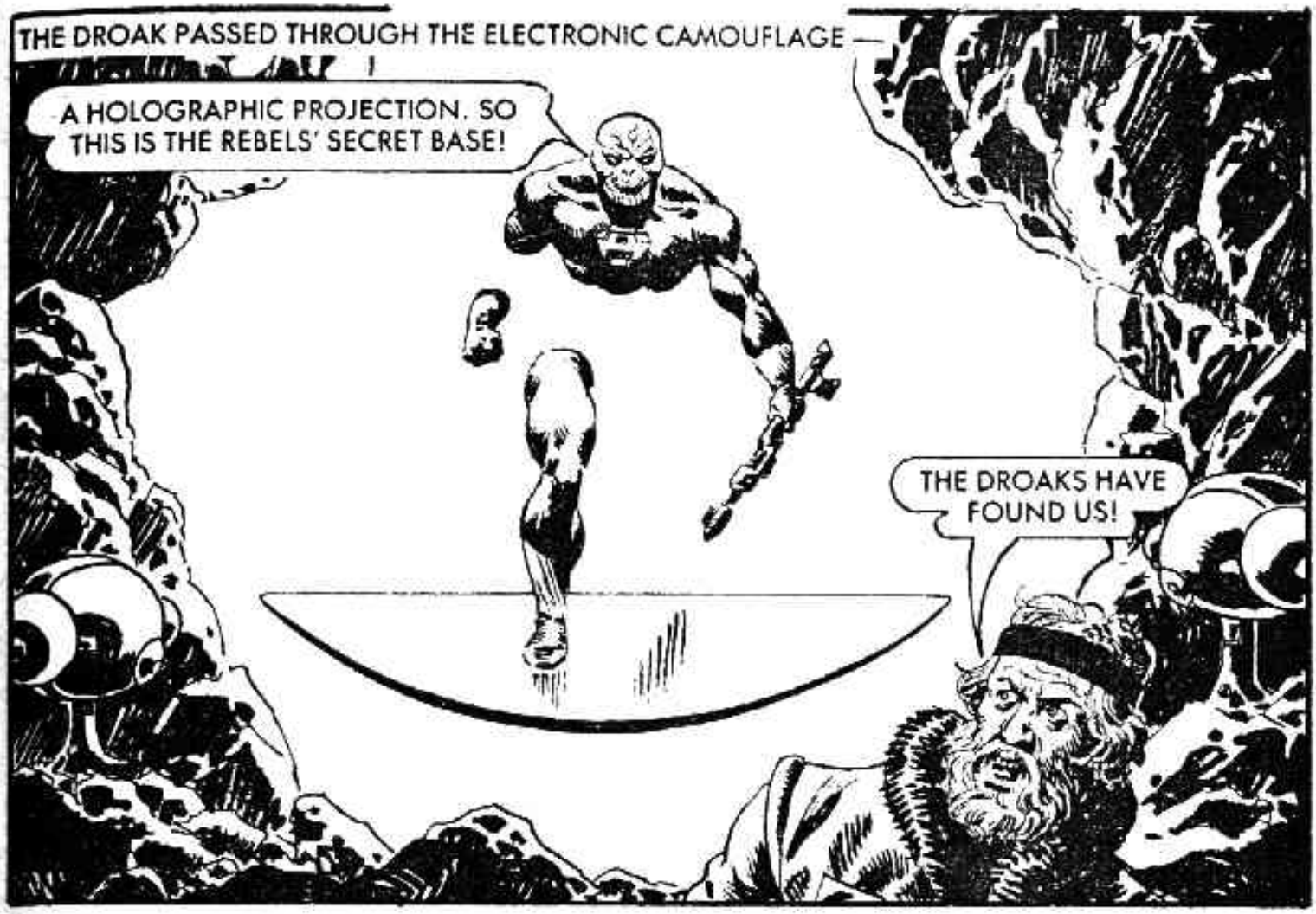
WHILE, BACK ON EARTH, ARLON WAS BEING TAKEN INTO A HIDDEN CAVERN IN THE MOUNTAINSIDE.
DR LUSTRA . . . YOU'RE BACK. I DO WISH YOU'D STOP TRAILING ABOUT OUT THERE WHENEVER YOU HAVE SOME TECHNICAL PROBLEM ON YOUR MIND . . .
NEVER MIND THAT NOW! THIS LAD NEEDS URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION.
A LITTLE LATER —
WH-WHO ARE YOU?
ONLY HERE, DIRECTLY BENEATH THE TRANSMITTER, IS THERE A BLIND SPOT WHERE THE SOUND WAVES CANNOT REACH. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE ON EARTH FREE OF THE DROAKS' RULE.
WE ARE OF THE SAME RACE! WE LIVE HERE BECAUSE THE DROAKS TRANSMIT ULTRA-HIGH FREQUENCY SOUND WAVES ALL OVER THE WORLD. PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO THESE WAVES HAS A HYPNOTIC ENSLAVING EFFECT ON THE HUMAN MIND.

WHO ARE THE DROAKS? WHERE ARE THEY FROM AND HOW DID THEY COME TO EARTH?
THE DROAKS ARE THE ABSOLUTE RULERS OF THE REALM WE CALL HYPER-SPACE, HAVING LONG SINCE CONQUERED EVERY OTHER INTELLIGENT LIFE-FORM THERE.
HOWEVER, SOME YEARS AGO THEY BEGAN TO NOTICE OUR PROTOTYPE FASTER THAN LIGHT SHIPS PASSING THROUGH THE UNIVERSE.

THEY DEVISED A WAY OF FOLLOWING OUR SHIPS BACK INTO NORMAL SPACE. HERE, THEY FOUND A WHOLE NEW UNIVERSE TO CONQUER — STARTING WITH THE PLANET EARTH!
WHAT'S WRONG?
OUR SENSORS — DROAKS ARE APPROACHING.

AND, OUTSIDE . . .
THE HUMAN MUST BE DEAD! HE CAN'T HAVE SURVIVED THAT FALL.
THE OVERLORD WANTS US TO FIND THE BODY. WE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN.

FOOTPRINTS THAT LEAD NOWHERE . . . THIS BEARS FURTHER INVESTIGATION . . .


THE DROAK PASSED THROUGH THE ELECTRONIC CAMOUFLAGE —
A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION. SO THIS IS THE REBELS' SECRET BASE!
THE DROAKS HAVE FOUND US!

IT'S NO GOOD . . . NO-ONE HAS EVER KILLED A DROAK. THEIR PLATFORMS HAVE SOME KIND OF DEFENCE MECHANISM WHICH RESIST OUR LASER FIRE.

ARLON, WAIT . . . WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

ARLON RAN AND OPENED HIS GLIDE WINGS —
HUHH?
THE YOUNG FOOL! IF WEAPONS ARE NO GOOD WHAT DOES HE THINK HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WILL ACCOMPLISH?

ARLON HAD COUNTED ON THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE . . .
. . . BUT THE DROAK WAS QUICK TO RECOVER.
NOW, RASH HUMAN, YOU SHALL FEEL THE STRENGTH OF A DROAK!

SUDDENLY, THE BOX ARLON HAD BEEN PUSHING AGAINST, FLASHED —

THE DROAK HAS . . . VANISHED!

VERY FEW PEOPLE ATTEMPTED ANY KIND OF RETALIATION.
COME ON, DARL. HERE'S OUR CHANCE!
ALL RIGHT, BRIN. BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THOSE EXPLOSIVES?
SURE! I'VE WATCHED THE DEMOLITION DROIDS AT WORK OFTEN ENOUGH, HAVEN'T I?
WELL, LET'S GET IT PLANTED. THEY'LL KNOW WE'RE HERE BY NOW AND WILL PROBABLY SUSPECT WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND . . .

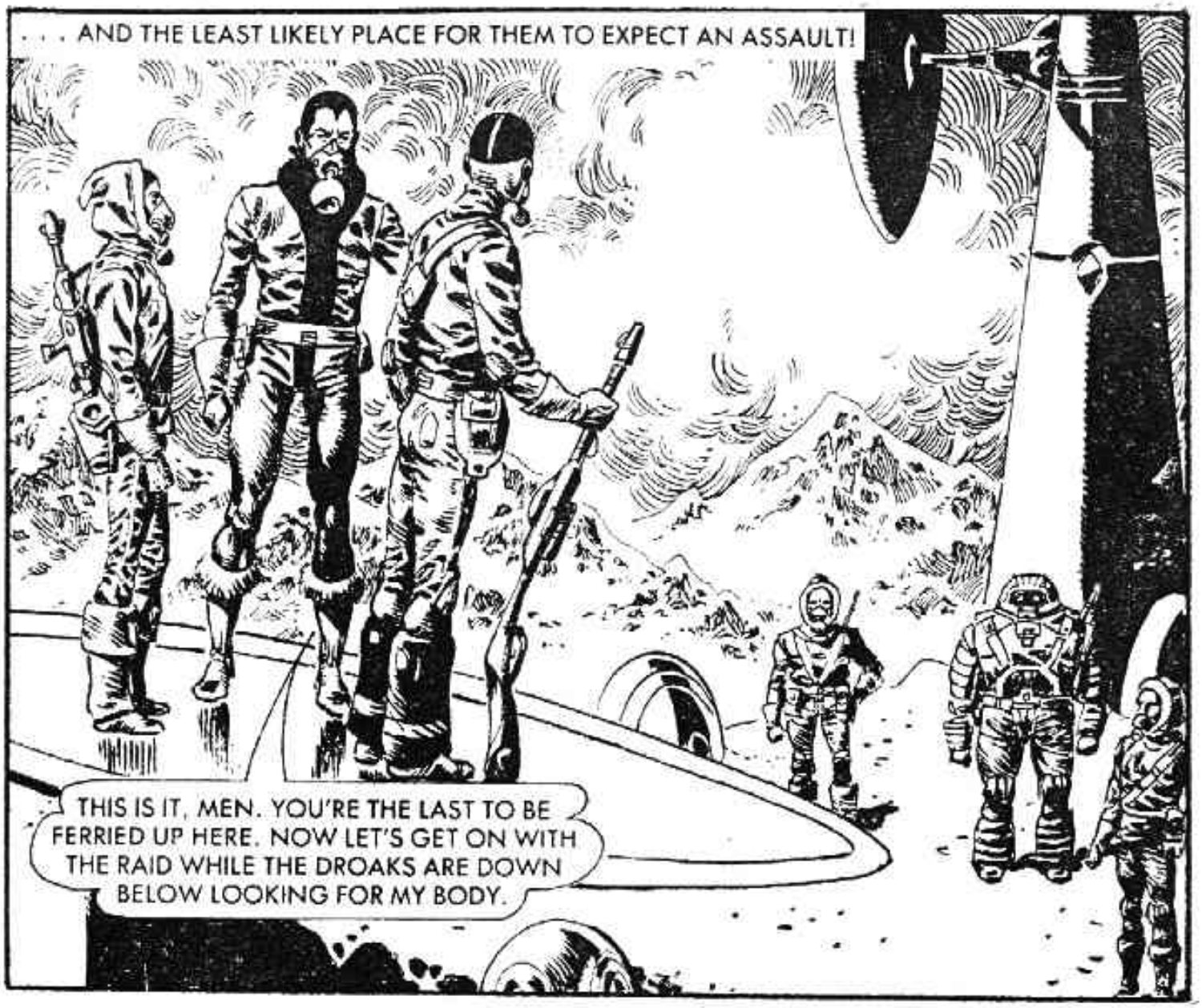
THEY'RE TRYING TO SHAKE US LOOSE. LET'S HOPE OUR MAGNETIC SOLES HOLD.
LOOK, THAT HATCH IS OPENING BEHIND US . . .

THE SHIP LEVELLED OFF —
LET THIS STOP YOU, HUMANS!
THROW THE EXPLOSIVE, BRIN! INTO THE HATCH!

THAT'S DONE IT! CATCH THAT FALLING WEAPON, DARL, AND WE'LL SEE HOW MUCH MORE DAMAGE WE CAN CAUSE!

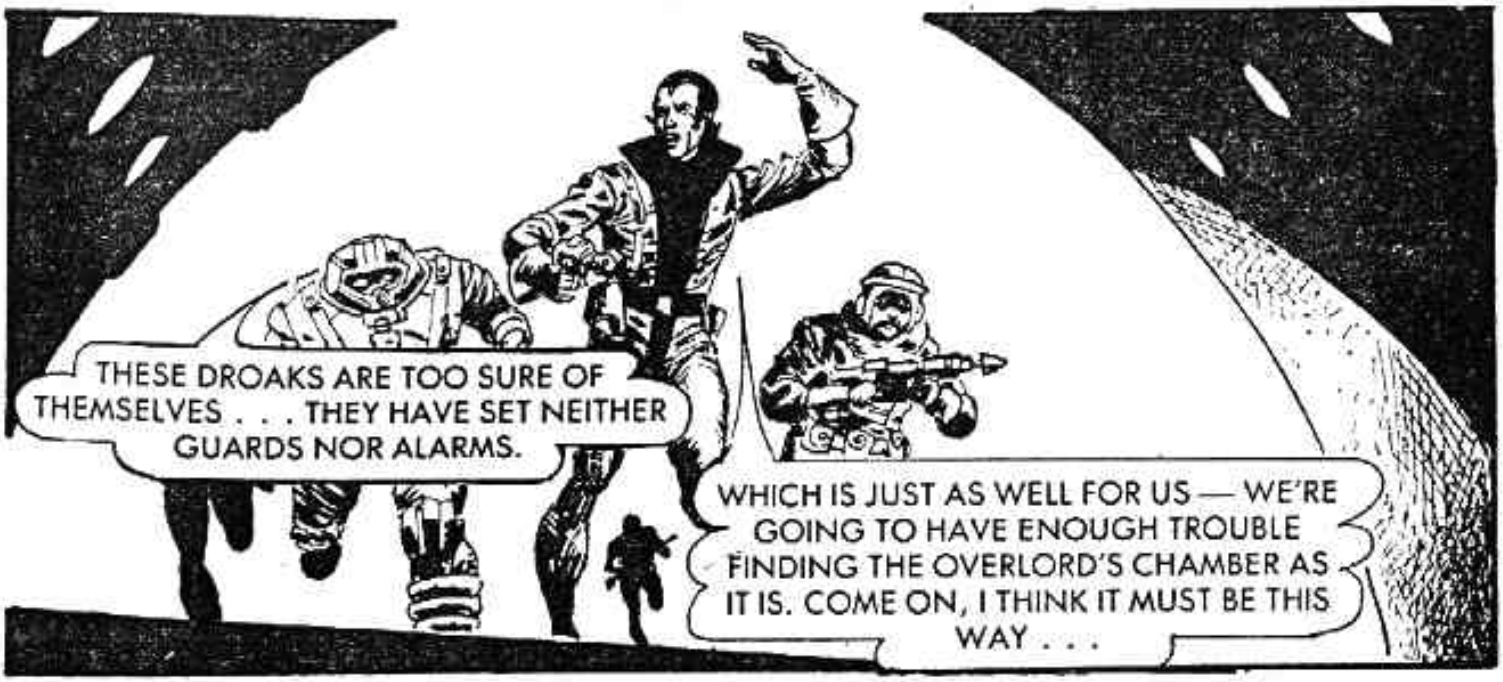
KEEP FIRING, DARL. I'M GOING TO GET THESE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE.
FOOLISH HUMANS! THEY MAY HAVE WON, BUT I WILL DESTROY THEM BOTH BEFORE THEY GET OFF ANOTHER SHOT!
NO YOU DON'T, DROAK!

MOMENTS LATER —
THE EXTRA WEIGHT IS PUTTING A SEVERE STRAIN IN OUR ANTI-GRAVS, BRIN.
YES, WE'RE IN FOR A ROUGH LANDING, BUT WE SHOULD THINK OURSELVES LUCKY . . .
. . . THAT WE'VE GOT OUT OF THIS WITH ONLY A FEW BUMPS AND BRUISES.
MEANWHILE, ON MOUNT EVEREST . . . AT 8850 METRES, THE HIGHEST POINT ON EARTH, THE MOST LOGICAL PLACE FOR THE DROAKS TO BUILD THEIR MIND-CONTROLLING TRANSMITTER . . .


. . . AND THE LEAST LIKELY PLACE FOR THEM TO EXPECT AN ASSAULT!
THIS IS IT, MEN. YOU'RE THE LAST TO BE FERRIED UP HERE. NOW LET'S GET ON WITH THE RAID WHILE THE DROAKS ARE DOWN BELOW LOOKING FOR MY BODY.

WE'VE TRIED TO BLAST OUR WAY IN, BUT THE WHOLE STRUCTURE SEEMS LASER RESISTANT.
I'D GUESSED AS MUCH . . .

ARLON ATTACHED THE DROAK'S METABOLIC ADAPTOR MECHANISM TO THE DOOR.
THE DROAKS MUST ALSO LIVE IN FTL CONDITIONS. IF THIS DEVICE WORKS THE WAY WE THINK IT DOES, IT SHOULD SLOW DOWN THE DOOR'S MOLECULAR STRUCTURE ENOUGH TO DO . . .
. . . THIS!


THESE DROAKS ARE TOO SURE OF THEMSELVES . . . THEY HAVE SET NEITHER GUARDS NOR ALARMS.
WHICH IS JUST AS WELL FOR US — WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ENOUGH TROUBLE FINDING THE OVERLORD'S CHAMBER AS IT IS. COME ON, I THINK IT MUST BE THIS WAY . . .

PRESENTLY . . .
WHAT? — YOU!
IT'S ALL OVER, DROAK! CONTACT YOUR FLEET . . . CALL OFF THE ATTACK ON MY SHIP. MAYBE THEN I CAN CONVINCE THE ROBOTS TO CHANGE COURSE . . .

DO IT—OR I'LL BLOW YOU BACK INTO HYPER-SPACE WHERE YOU BELONG!
BUT, UNKNOWN TO ARLON, HIS VESSEL WAS HAVING DIFFICULTIES OF ITS OWN. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DROAK SHIP HAD HASTENED THE END OF THE 'PILGRIM'.
HURRY ALONG, MASTERS. OUR DOME HAS SUFFERED IRREPARABLE DAMAGE. THE 'PILGRIM' MUST BE EVACUATED.

ALL OVER THE GREAT SHIP, CIRCUITS WERE CUTTING OUT AND OTHERS WERE BEING DANGEROUSLY OVERLOADED.
AARGH!

WAIT . . . YOU CAN'T DO THIS! THE DROAK FLEET IS OUT THERE . . . WE'LL ALL BE KILLED!
WE ARE SORRY, SIR. BUT OUR PRIMARY DUTY NOW IS TO EVACUATE THIS VESSEL. NOTHING MUST INTERFERE WITH THAT.
STUPID, UNTHINKING MACHINES! THEY CAN'T SEE PAST THEIR PROGRAMMING!

BUT . .

THE DROAKES . . . THEY'RE LEAVING!
BRIN, I'M PICKING UP A MESSAGE . . .
ATTENTION, PILGRIM, ATTENTION . . . IF YOU MAINTAIN YOUR PRESENT COURSE, YOU WILL CAUSE THE DEATHS OF COUNTLESS HUMAN LIVES . . . PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE . . .
IT—IT SOUNDS LIKE ARLON!

AND, ON EARTH . . .
DO YOU HEAR, ROBOTS? MESSAGE REPEATS— BRIN . . .! DARL . . . ! WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE?

WHILE EVERYONE WAS DISTRACTED . . .
THE OVERLORD HAS EJECTED!
YOU HAVEN'T WON YET, HUMANS. EVEN NOW MY FLEET IS RETURNING FROM SPACE. SOON YOUR PUNY RACE WILL BE WIPED FROM THE FACE OF THIS PLANET!

ARLON AND HIS COMPANIONS HURRIED UP TO THE NEXT FLOOR, BUT . . .
TOO LATE! HE WOULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT PRIMING THIS PLACE FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION, EITHER. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
NO . . . YOU GO. SEE THE OTHERS GET OUT SAFELY. THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST DO HERE . . .

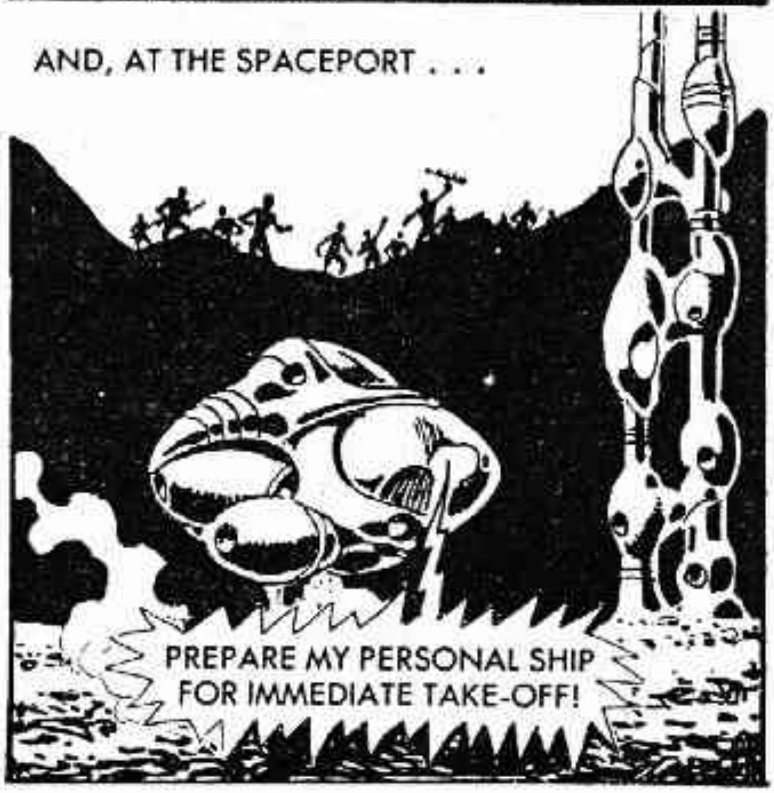
MOMENTS LATER, BACK IN THE OVERLORD'S COMMAND CENTRE . . .
PEOPLE OF EARTH, HEAR MY WORDS . . . YOU ARE SLAVES NO LONGER . . . RISE UP AND FIGHT THE ALIEN OPPRESSORS!
SHOW THE DROAKS HOW FREE HUMANS FIGHT . . . LET US RID OUR WORLD OF THEIR FOUL RACE FOREVER!

MOUNT EVEREST EXPLODED, AND SO ENDED THE LIFE OF DR LUSTRA. BUT HE DID NOT DIE IN VAIN.

ALL OVER THE WORLD, LUSTRA'S MESSAGE HAD BEEN HEARD.

AT THEM, MEN! DESTROY THE DROAKS!

ONWARD, MEN! TO THE CITY—AND CONQUEST!



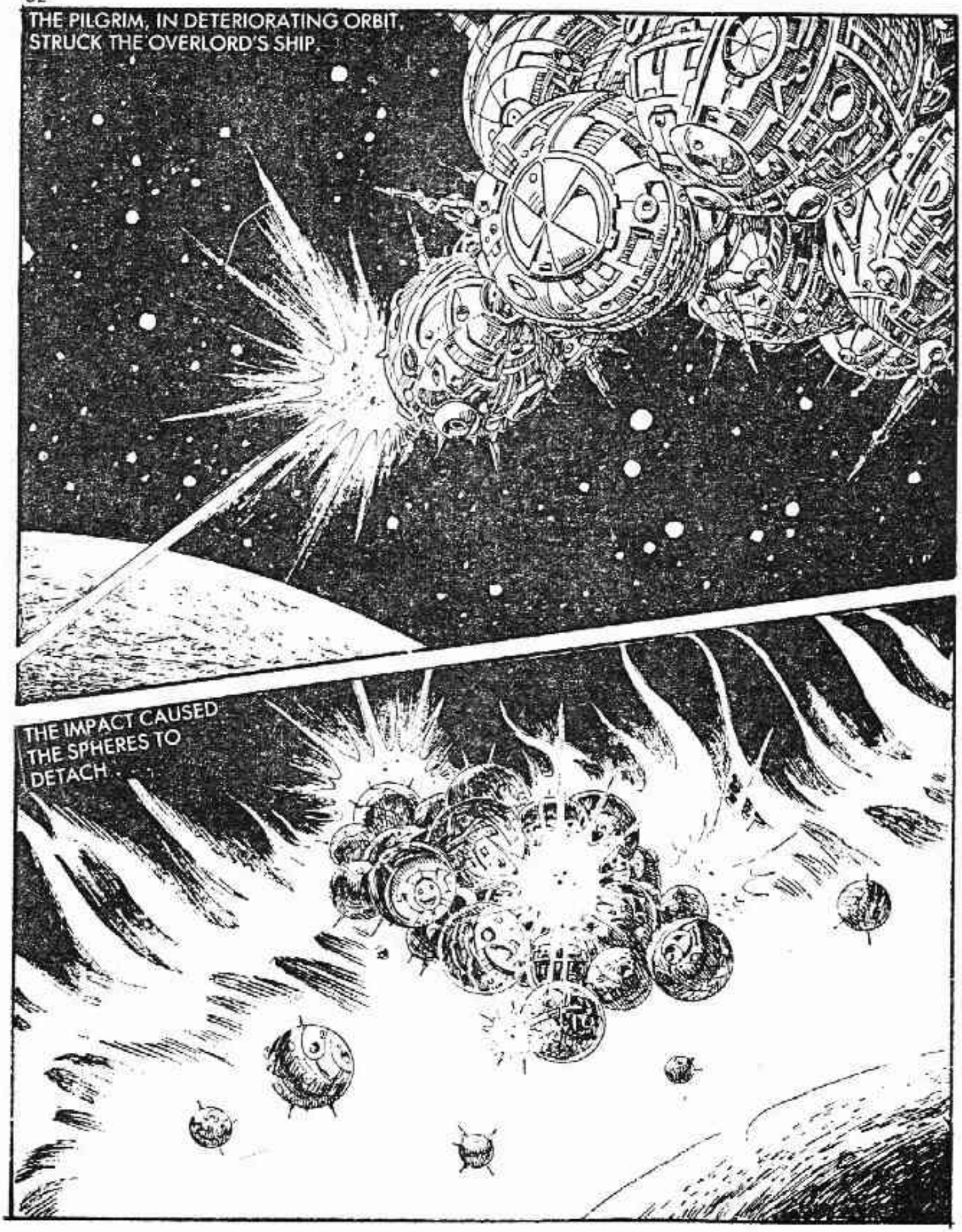
KEEP FIRING, YOU FOOLS!
IT'S NO USE . . . THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM . . . WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT IN TIME!

WHAT A SIGHT! THE OVERLORD HASN'T A CHANCE NOW. THE CROWD ARE ALMOST UPON HIM.
NO! LOOK . . .

. . . THE WARFLEET HAS RETURNED!

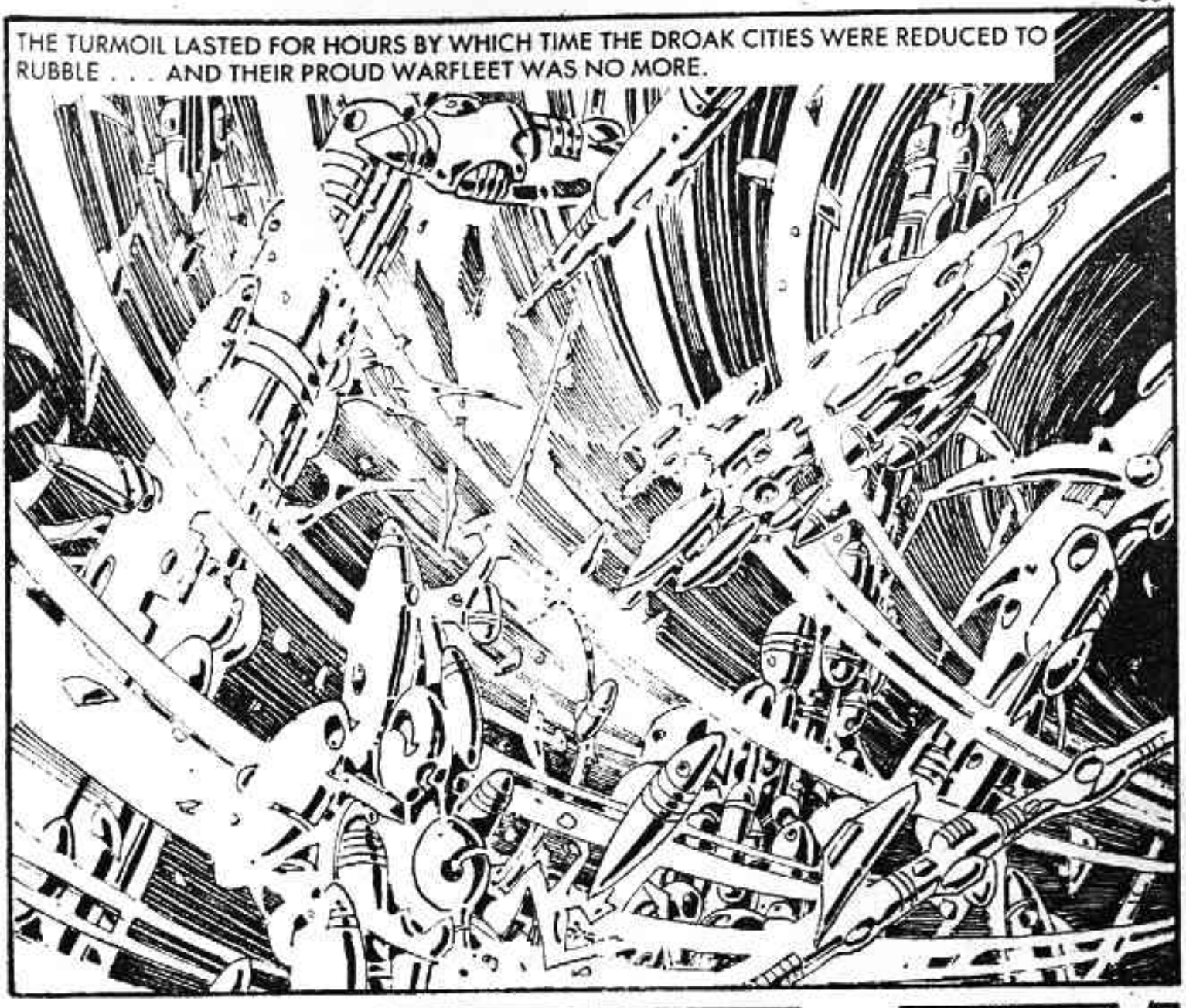
PUNY HUMANS! THE GALAXY WILL BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM!

THE SHIP BLASTED OFF AND THE DROAK OVERLORD DID NOT SPARE A SECOND THOUGHT FOR THE SLAUGHTER HE WAS LEAVING BEHIND.
HE WAS ALREADY DREAMING OF NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER.
NOW THAT I'M FREE OF THE ATMOSPHERE, I CAN JETTISON THE HEAT SHEILDS AND—
BUT—
NOOOO! AAAAGGHHHH!


THE PILGRIM, IN DETERIORATING ORBIT, STRUCK THE OVERLORD'S SHIP.
THE IMPACT CAUSED THE SPHERES TO DETACH . . .

. . . JUST BEFORE IT EXPLODED!
THE SHOCK OF THE PILGRIM'S END WAS FELT ALL AROUND THE WORLD . . .
. . . AND THE TURBULENCE CREATED SENT ANY AIRBORNE VESSELS OUT OF CONTROL.

GOT TO STAY DOWN FLAT . . . OFFER AS LITTLE WIND RESISTANCE AS POSSIBLE . . .


THE TURMOIL LASTED FOR HOURS BY WHICH TIME THE DROAK CITIES WERE REDUCED TO RUBBLE . . . AND THEIR PROUD WARFLEET WAS NO MORE.

AND FINALLY . . .
SILENCE . . . CAN IT REALLY BE OVER AT LAST . . . ? —

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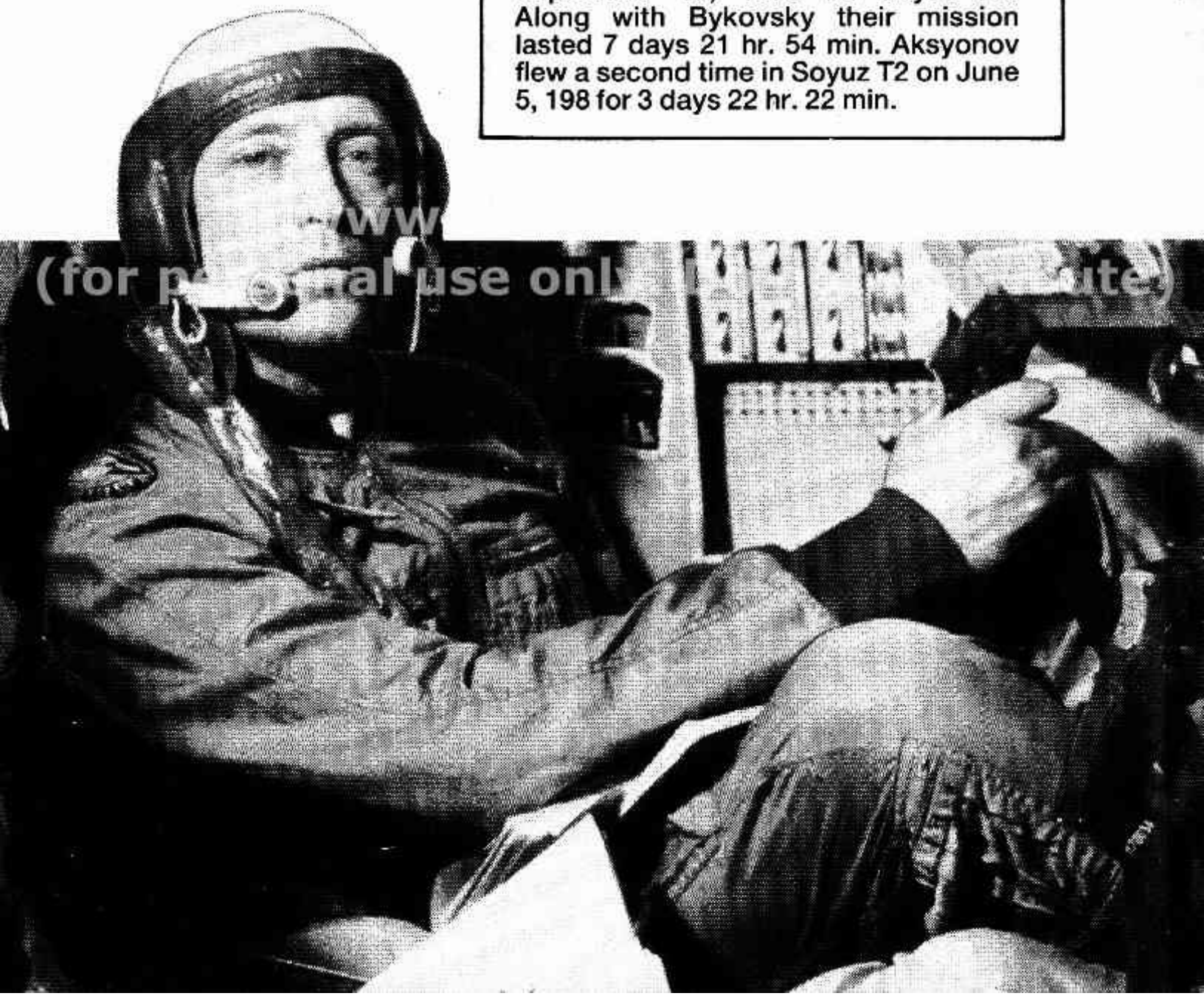
79

Vladimir V. Aksyonov, 41, first flew on September 15, 1976 on Soyuz 22. Along with Bykovsky their mission lasted 7 days 21 hr. 54 min. Aksyonov flew a second time in Soyuz T2 on June 5, 198 for 3 days 22 hr. 22 min.



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